

**Woodstock Conservation Commission  
Development Review Committee**

Date: May 14, 2009

Meeting called to order at 7:41 p.m.

Conservation Commission members in attendance: Jean Pillo, Lee Wesler and Bet Zimmerman

Members of the Public in attendance: Dawn Adiletta, Jeffrey Stefanik of OSLAC and Martin

Nieski. Email: [nieski@charter.net](mailto:nieski@charter.net)

Two properties were discussed:

- Martin & Catherine Nieski, 485 Barlow Cemetery Road – Review of property for farmland preservation (Purchase of Development Rights)
- Review of revised Woodstock Academy plans for athletic field improvements

The Conservation Commission's recommendations are found on the attached files.

Meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Elizabeth Zimmerman*

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**RE:** Martin & Catherine Nieski, 485 Barlow Cemetery Road – Review of property for farmland preservation (Purchase of Development Rights) criteria as requested by the open space acquisition and farmland preservation committee. (42.80 acre parcel, map 6387, block 41, lot 01).

Note: Nieski was in attendance and provided information about resources and current land use. The Conservation Commission GIS data was also consulted. Nieski indicated that the parcel was recently scored by the USDA NRCS at 86 out of 100 points.

This parcel is located on the southern border of Woodstock, on the Eastford Town Line, with about 1450 feet of frontage on Barlow Cemetery Road. (Note that the 1959 map in Nieski's possession shows the property as 41.4 total acres. The tax assessor's map shows parcel 1A as being owned by Rondeau, but Nieski indicated parcel 1A is not reflected in the deed and he believes that parcel is part of acreage he owns.)

**Site Conditions:**

- **Current land use:**
  - More than half of Nieski's property is managed for hay for the Selbuort farm (John White). Manure is spread on the field. The remainder is woodlands, with some scattered cultivated fruit trees (such as pear and apple trees) and berries.
  - The land is in PA-490.
  - Two existing houses on the property front Barlow Cemetery Road. (A barn shown on a 1959 map is no longer in existence.)
- **Natural Resources:**
  - A small spring-fed pond (approximately two acres) is located on the parcel, with trout in it. The cold water stream feeds Bungay Brook, which goes into the Still River (a State designated greenway.)
  - The topographic map shows some small wetland areas to the east and the west. Vernal pools are likely to be present.
  - The property is at one of the gateways to Woodstock (from Eastford via Barlow Cemetery Road)
  - Nieski indicated wildlife is abundant on the property, including deer, turkey, coyote and bobcat.
  - The parcel is located within Forest Priority Area 3.
  - According to a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) evaluation, about 32 out of 42.80 acres (~75%) are Prime Agricultural soils, or soils of Statewide Importance.
- **Cultural resources:**
  - There are 19<sup>th</sup> century stone walls on the property.
  - The residence is a historic property, with the original part dating back to 1699. There were additions around 1750 and 1850.
  - No cultural resource "blobs" are visible on David Keegan Associates map.
- **Topography:** Gently sloping.
- **Surrounding land use:**
  - Most of the surrounding land is uncommitted farmland or woodland. Across the road is a meadow, and a house is planned for construction. Farmland to the east

is owned by L. Rukstela and Rondeau is being hayed. Land to the north is mostly woodland, with four houses also located to the north, according to Nieski.

- Nearby open space: The closest open space is the Harrington property to the Northwest, the Evans subdivision to the North, and Camp Nahaco to the West.
- No farmland in the Purchase of Development Rights program is nearby in Woodstock, although there are scattered agricultural soils in the area. Efforts to get data from the Eastford website met with technical difficulties, but should be pursued.

**Conservation Priorities:**

- Resources of value on this property include prime agricultural soils, soil of Statewide Importance, some scattered wetlands and possibly vernal pools and grassland. The property is at a gateway into Woodstock, and has 1450 acres of road frontage.
- It would be useful to know whether there is any committed open space nearby in Eastford, for connectivity purposes.

**Conclusion:** Although this farmland is not in the highest priority areas for agricultural land preservation as outlined in *A Plan of Open Space and Conservation*, the proposal to preserve this land through the CT Department of Agriculture Purchase of Development Rights program is compatible with Woodstock's *A Plan of Open Space and Conservation*.

Disclaimer: Any recommendations made by the Conservation Commission are advisory in nature only.

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Date: May 14, 2009

**RE: Review of revised Woodstock Academy plans for athletic field improvements, SP577-08-02**

**CORRECTIONS:** The Conservation Commission review dated 03/17/08 contained two errors: A reference to Harrisville Golf Course should have read ROSELAND Golf Course, and a reference to a stream that flows west to Roseland Lake should have read EAST to Roseland Lake.

The changes made since the last proposal reviewed by the Conservation Commission appear to consist of tennis courts to the West in lieu of a practice field.

In addition to the recommendations contained in our 03/17/08 memo, the Conservation Commission has the following comments on this proposal:

- Paxton-Woodbridge soils are highly erodible when disturbed (reference *Suspended-Sediment Characteristics of Muddy Brook at Woodstock, CT*, USGS 1991).
- The data in the GIS system indicates that the stream channel that drains from the Academy to the Roseland Lake wetland contains Paxton soils.
- Stream bank erosion is already evident where the stream crosses Roseland Park Road.
- Public funds are being invested to improve the water quality of the Little River and Roseland Lake. Projects underway in this area include the following:
  - ECCD received a Clean Water Act grant to work with area farmers to reduce erosion and improve incorporation of manure into the soil.
  - ECRC&D Area received a Clean Water Act grant to work with farmers to implement best management practices for manure handling.
  - ECCD, the Roseland Park Board of Trustees and Roseland Lake landowners have implemented phragmites control project at Roseland Lake.
  - The Town of Putnam has applied to the State of CT DEP for a twenty year extension to continue to withdraw drinking water from Roseland Lake.

**Recommendations:**

- Any actions taken regarding the proposed development at the Academy should be consistent with efforts to prevent further degradation of water quality in Roseland Lake.
- Stormwater should remain onsite. Infiltration should be maximized. This will be difficult given the amount of land proposed for development.
- **The Woodstock Conservation Commission Development Review Committee highly recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission request that the CT Environmental Review Team review this proposal, due to the potential for offsite impacts from increased stormwater volume and velocity, and highly erodible soils in a stream channel leading to Roseland Lake.**

Disclaimer: Any recommendations made by the Conservation Commission are advisory in nature only and are not guaranteed to be accepted by the Planning and Zoning Commission during their review of the same property.